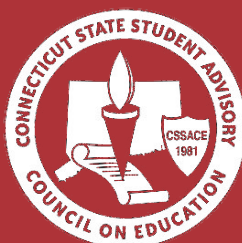


30th Annual

CHALLENGE TO EDUCATIONAL CITIZENSHIP AWARD PROGRAM



JUNE 3, 2025 | 10:00 AM
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS | CHESHIRE CT



Connecticut State
Department of Education

Introduction

The State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) is pleased to have offered schools throughout Connecticut the opportunity to apply for recognition in the 30th Annual Challenge to Educational Citizenship Award program. This program was the "brain child" of the 1996 edition of SSACE as a way of promoting citizenship through co-curricular programs.

Today, we honor 20 winning entries that embody the spirit of citizenship and an altruistic commitment to serving others. Submitted projects were judged by the high school student members of this year's council. The submissions were evaluated on the basis of the depth, breadth, and quality of impact on others in the school community.

Schools were asked to reflect on the organizations within their school community. Do any epitomize exemplary civic awareness, cooperation, and boundless potential for community impact?

SSACE Adviser

*Cherese Odukwe, Director of Student Activities
Connecticut Association of Schools*

Masters of Ceremony

SSACE Students

Welcome

CAS-CIAC Staff

Opening Remarks

Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, CSDE

**EVERYBODY CAN BE GREAT
BECAUSE ANYBODY
CAN SERVE**

Martin Luther King, Jr.

2025 AWARD WINNING SCHOOLS

“The Mental Health Advocates Club” - Bristol Eastern High School

The “Mental Health Advocates Club” (MHAC) is a student-run extracurricular organization that is wholeheartedly committed to promoting mental health and wellness within the school community at Bristol Eastern High School. In March they orchestrated a highly successful, student-led Mental Health Exploration Day—a half-day in-school event featuring more than ten different community partners, therapy animals, engaging hands-on activities, small-group breakout sessions, and a powerful keynote by Mykee Fowlin.

“AP Ambassadors” - Norwalk High School

The “AP Ambassador” program is a student-led mentoring program to support first - generation and opportunity gap students with support and mentorship as they take advanced classes.

The “Outstanding Women of Leadership Society (OWLS) 2025 Project for Change” - Hartford Public High School

The “Outstanding Women of Leadership Society” was established in the winter of 2017 and is open to all female identifying students second semester of Freshman year and older. Students must apply answering leadership questions and receiving letters of recommendation from faculty and staff. The mission is to foster an empowering space for young leaders to grow, create community, strengthen their skills, and create change in their community.

“Social Justice Week” at FHS - Farmington High School

A nine-year tradition, “Social Justice Week” (SJW) at Farmington High School is a studentled initiative that promotes inclusivity, equity and social justice through student voice and empowerment.

“Environmental Club”- Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School

The “NHRMS Environmental Club” promotes sustainability, hands-on learning, and community collaboration directly benefiting 348 students, staff, and families. Fifteen students participate, dedicating 1.5 hours per week in the summer working in the school garden alongside the East Haddam Garden Club and one hour per week after school during the academic year. They also maintain the pollinator garden, supporting biodiversity. This initiative encourages healthy lifestyles, scientific inquiry, and teamwork while fostering patience, perseverance, and civic responsibility.

“Social Justice League”- University High School of Science and Engineering

In 2023, a group of high school students formed the “Social Justice League” to advocate for legislation that would provide free city bus access to all high school students in Connecticut. During their inaugural year, the group successfully secured the inclusion of a pilot initiative within a broader education bill. This resulted in a \$350,000 grant awarded to the cities of Hartford and New Haven.

2025 AWARD WINNING SCHOOLS

“Hope in Humanity Assembly Program” - Ridgefield High School

The annual “Hope in Humanity” sophomore assembly program is a collaborative effort between the Interact club and the Social Studies Department, with a focus on various injustices and human rights violations in the past and present. Students are challenged to think critically about what they can do as active, global citizens to make positive change in their own community and world in which they live. This program involves two speakers - Judith Altmann, a Holocaust survivor, and KidsKonnnect, a program that facilitates the livestreaming of students in Ukraine.

“Seymour Snow Brigade” - Seymour Middle School

The “Seymour Snow Brigade” was created by Brayden Ferreira and Thomas Halligan. It was established to develop a bridge between people in the community willing to help shovel sidewalks, pathways, and driveways for the elderly and disabled residents of Seymour.

“Childhood Cancer Community Project” - Oxford Middle School

The 8th and 7th grade gray teams of about 140 students at Oxford Middle School sponsored a fundraiser for Avery’s Little Army. This is an organization raising funds for children’s cancer in honor of a young girl named Avery who died of cancer last summer in Milford, CT.

“East Lyme Middle School Service Club” - East Lyme Middle School

The mission/purpose of the Service Club is to empower students into being strong advocates in service of their local community. The students are given the opportunity to choose the initiatives they would like to support. They plan and implement every aspect of the projects and in turn build leadership skills, awareness of self and others and compassion and empathy.

“Medical Moment” - Irving A. Robbins Middle School

The “Medical Moment” is a 65-day project that all 8th grade students at IAR participate in each year. It was founded by the science teachers at IAR around 2015 with the initial goal of students getting involved in learning about the human body systems. Students choose a disease/disorder to research and share out about spreading awareness to others. This helps people with certain illnesses/disorders gain more awareness and students learn about various diseases that impact humanity as a whole.

“THS Student Council Lock In 2025” - Thomaston High School

The mission/purpose of the Thomaston High School’s annual 2025 “Lock-In” is to raise pledges for every hour you are awake to benefit Connecticut Children’s Medical Center.

“Bracelets for Abby” - Henry James Memorial School

Students sold bracelets in honor of the Abby Zittoun Family Foundation. Abby Zittoun was first diagnosed with cancer in 1st grade. She later passed away on October 15th at 13 years old. Students designed two different bracelets in honor of Abby. One bracelet displayed her name, and the other had her favorite quotes from the musical “Wicked.”

2025 AWARD WINNING SCHOOLS

“Woodstock Academy Kindness Club” - Woodstock Academy

The “Kindness Club” group of around 15 students and one faculty advisor, whose mission is to spread kindness and positivity around school. Through various activities and campaigns, they have served the school of 1,000 students. They meet for an hour a week and have been an operating club for the past two years. They put on fun Fridays in the spring that include bubbles and chalk activities outside, give out free hot chocolate in the winter, and are currently running a school-wide egg scramble where we hid 50 eggs around campus filled with kind messages for students to find and pass on to someone to brighten their day!

“Bullard Havens Toy Drive” - Bullard-Havens Technical High School

The Christmas Giveaway was a project we started because we wanted to give families, especially children, a special holiday season by providing them with gifts even if their families were not able to do so because of financial difficulties.

“Making Blankets For Kids Who Need a Hug”- Madison Middle School

Madison Middle School’s KARE club goes beyond all and they reached a record of making over 251 blankets this year. The club started off by sending blankets to people who survived the North Carolina hurricane. After that, they sent blankets to an entire second grade classroom of a child who fought and passed away of cancer. Throughout all the years it’s been running, they have made over 24,000 blankets.

“Rebels for commUNITY”- New Fairfield High School

Anti-hate programming for young people is of great importance as it plays a crucial role in promoting a society that values diversity, empathy, and understanding. By engaging young people in such programs, students are equipped with the necessary tools to recognize, challenge, and ultimately combat prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance. These initiatives not only cultivate a culture of inclusivity and respect but also empower the next generation to champion social justice, build stronger communities, and contribute positively to a more equitable world.

“Dream Team” - North Branford High School

The Dream Team program has been running for approximately 10 years and has grown and evolved over the past 7 years. There are typically 30 students involved in the Dream Team program.

Dream Team serves as a vital leadership, role modeling, and mentoring initiative that connects our high school students with the two elementary schools in our district. Through participation in large school events such as Read Across America, Earth Day, Field Day, and Character Counts Day, our high school leaders foster meaningful connections and support for their younger peers. It's rewarding for students to return as mentors, inspiring the next generation of leaders while fostering a positive school climate.

2025 AWARD WINNING SCHOOLS

“Powder Puff Volleyball Fundraiser for the Tommy Fund” - Bristol Central High School

Interact Club is a student-led service organization with 146 active members dedicated to making a positive impact in our community and beyond. Our mission is to promote leadership through service. We volunteer often at the local senior center, providing companionship and assistance to elderly residents. Members also participate in numerous community events and fundraising efforts throughout the school year. One of our proudest achievements includes raising over \$25,000 for the MakeA-Wish Foundation, helping grant life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

“Greyhound Nation’s Athletes Read Across Naugatuck Day” - Naugatuck High School

For the past three years, every March, 50 student athletes embarked on a tour of Naugatuck’s elementary schools. The tour begins with a visit to a selected school, where young students are welcomed by a spirited procession of high school athletes holding inspirational signs and cheering them on. In classrooms, the athletes—many proud alumni—present personal slideshows, reconnect with former teachers, and read picture books aloud, engaging and inspiring the children.



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